

Claims

- [c1] 1.A method for communicating information to a caller on a telephone network, said method comprising the steps of:
- (a)generating a signal suitable for producing an audible dial tone;
 - (b)transmitting said signal to the receiver of a telephone set, when said caller initially takes said receiver off-hook, to thereby produce said audible dial tone; and
 - (c)superimposing an audible information message over said audible dial tone while said audible dial tone is produced.
- [c2] 2.A method according to claim 1, wherein said caller is a human being or a modem.
- [c3] 3.A method according to claim 1, wherein said telephone network includes at least one of a Public Switched Telephone Network, a Voice over Internet Protocol telephone network, an Integrated Services Digital Network compatible telephone network, or a private telephone network.
- [c4] 4.A method according to claim 1, wherein said signal suitable for producing an audible dial tone is an oscillat-

ing electrical signal.

- [c5] 5.A method according to claim 1, wherein step (a) is accomplished with a dial tone generator comprising an oscillator circuit.
- [c6] 6.A method according to claim 1, wherein said telephone set is an analog telephone set, an electronic telephone set, a digital telephone set, a Voice over Internet Protocol telephone set, an Integrated Services Digital Network telephone set, or a proprietary telephone set.
- [c7] 7.A method according to claim 1, wherein step (b) is at least partially accomplished with at least one transmission means selected from the group consisting of a local loop, a trunk, and an extension line.
- [c8] 8.A method according to claim 1, wherein step (c) is at least partially accomplished with an electronic circuit having a memory storing said audible information message in digital format.
- [c9] 9.A method according to claim 1, wherein step (c) is executed and repeated periodically for the duration of step (b).
- [c10] 10.A method according to claim 1, wherein step (c) is executed and repeated intermittently for the duration of

step (b).

- [c11] 11.A method according to claim 1, wherein said audible information message includes human-intelligible words.
- [c12] 12.A method according to claim 1, wherein said audible information message has the characteristic of being whisper-like.
- [c13] 13.A method according to claim 1, wherein said audible information message is a branding-type message that identifies a provider of local telephone service.
- [c14] 14.A method according to claim 1, wherein said audible information message includes symbolic sounds serving to identify a provider of local telephone service.
- [c15] 15.A method according to claim 1, wherein said audible dial tone has an associated decibel level and said audible information message has an associated overall decibel level such that said overall decibel level associated with said audible information message is lower than said decibel level associated with said audible dial tone.
- [c16] 16.A method according to claim 1, wherein at least one of steps (a) through (c) is executed at a public local exchange or a private branch exchange.
- [c17] 17.A method according to claim 1, wherein said tele-

phone set is an Integrated Services Digital Network telephone set, and at least one of steps (a) through (c) is executed from within said Integrated Services Digital Network telephone set.

[c18] 18.A method according to claim 1, said method further comprising the steps of:

executing steps (a) through (c) only after said caller initially takes said receiver off-hook; and

executing steps (a) through (c) only until said caller begins to dial a number on said telephone set.

[c19] 19.A method for communicating information to a caller on a telephone network, said method comprising the steps of:

(a)generating a signal suitable for producing an audible dial tone;

(b)transmitting said signal to the receiver of a telephone set, when said caller initially takes said receiver off-hook, to thereby produce said audible dial tone; and

(c)superimposing an audible information message over said audible dial tone while said audible dial tone is produced;

wherein said audible information message has the characteristic of being whisper-like; and

wherein said audible information message is a branding-type message that identifies a provider of local tele-

phone service.

- [c20] 20. A method for communicating information to a caller on a telephone network, said method comprising the steps of:
- (a) generating a signal suitable for producing an audible dial tone;
 - (b) transmitting said signal to the receiver of a telephone set, when said caller initially takes said receiver off-hook, to thereby produce said audible dial tone; and
 - (c) superimposing an audible information message over said audible dial tone while said audible dial tone is produced;
- wherein said audible dial tone has an associated decibel level and said audible information message has an associated overall decibel level such that said overall decibel level associated with said audible information message is lower than said decibel level associated with said audible dial tone; and
- wherein said audible information message is a branding-type message that identifies a provider of local telephone service.